

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2230

C O N F I D E N T I A L 1398

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RO

SUBJECT: VISIT OF APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH GROUP

REF: (A) STATE 65846; (B) BUCHAREST 5815 (1974)

1. SUMMARY: APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH GROUP (MUELLER, BAHLER, HUM ADY, GRAF, AND FRASER) DEPARTED BUCHAREST MARCH 31 WITHOUT ACCOMPLISHING THEIR OBJECTIVE OF "REGULARIZING" STATUS OF NAZARENE CHURCH IN ROMANIA, BUT WITH BETTER APPRECIATION FOR LOCAL SITUATION AND REALIZATION THAT PERHAPS TIME NOT YET RIPE FOR "NEGOTIATIONS", WHICH LOCAL NAZARENES VIA LETTERS, HAD INCORRECTLY LED GROUP TO BELIEVE WERE WELL ADVANCED. GROUP MET SEVERAL TIMES WITH AMBASSADOR AND EMBASSY STAFF MEMBERS, ONE OF WHOM ACCOMPANIED THEM TO MEETING AT DEPARTMENT OF CULTS. MEETING ARRANGED ONLY AFTER EMBASSY PERSUASION HAD OVERCOME INITIAL

RELUCTANCE BY SKITTISH CULTS OFFICIALS. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, MUELLER, ON BEHALF OF GROUP, EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR EMBASSY EFFORTS AND ASSISTANCE, AND INDICATED GROUP MAY RETURN IN LATE SUMMER OR FALL TO FURTHER ASSESS SITUATION. HE MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF HIS CONTACTING PRESIDENT FORD ON THIS MATTER, PRIOR TO A PRESIDENTIAL TRIP TO ROMANIA. END SUMMARY.

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2. UPON ARRIVAL GROUP MET INITIALLY WITH AMBASSADOR MARCH 27,

WHO BRIEFED THEM ON ROMANIAN LAWS GOVERNING PRACTICE OF RELIGION AND OFFERED EMBASSY ASSISTANCE TO FACILITATE THEIR ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH DEPARTMENT OF CULTS, WHICH WAS NOT AWARE OF GROUP'S PRESENCE IN ROMANIA. OVERCOMING CULTS' RELUCTANCE, EMBASSY ARRANGED A MARCH 28 MEETING FOR GROUP, ACCOMPANIED BY EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER, WITH DIRECTOR EUGEN MUNTEANU, EXTERNAL RELATIONS.

3. AT MEETING IT QUICKLY BECAME CLEAR THAT NAZARENES' REFUSAL TO BEAR ARMS WAS MAJOR STATED OBSTACLE TO ANY RECOGNITION AS OFFICIAL DENOMINATION BY ROMANIAN AUTHORITIES WHO, ACCORDING TO MUNTEANU, WOULD BROOK NO EXCEPTION TO THE RULE THAT ALL ROMANIAN CITIZENS MUST PERFORM MILITARY SERVICE AND BE AVAILABLE FOR COMBAT. MUNTEANU ALSO NOTED THAT ROMANIAN LAW CONTAINED NO PROVISION BY WHICH THE AMERICAN CHURCH COULD FINANCIALLY ASSIST THEIR LOCAL BRETHREN HERE AND URGED THEM TO DROP THE IDEA. THE ONE AND A HALF HOUR MEETING ENDED AMICABLY, BUT WITHOUT PROGRESS.

4. AN ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE A SECOND MEETING ON MARCH 31 WAS UNSUCCESSFUL, WITH CULTS OFFICIAL EXPLAINING THAT THERE WAS NOTHING FURTHER TO DISCUSS, AND BESIDES, EVERYONE IN AUTHORITY "OUT OF TOWN".

5. GROUP ALSO DISCOVERED, AS RESULT OF HUNYADY'S TRIP TO TURNAVENI TO VISIT SISTER, THAT, CONTRARY TO WHAT THEY HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE, NO FIRM OFFER TO ESTABLISH LOCAL NAZARENES AS OFFICIALLY-RECOGNIZED CULT HAD EVER BEEN MADE BY ANY CULTS OFFICIAL. THE "ANGELESCU" MENTIONED IN CORRESPONDENCE (AVAILABLE EUR/EE) WAS INVOLVED ONLY ON PERIPHERY, WHILE ANOTHER CULTS OFFICIAL SAICA NICOLAE (SIC) WAS CITED BY LUNGU, ONE OF CHURCH ELDERS, AS CULTS OFFICIAL MOST SYMPATHETIC TO NAZARENE CAUSE. ORIGINAL SUGGESTION ON \$100,000 "PAYMENT" FOR RECOGNITION APPARENTLY CAME FROM ANOTHER "FRIEND" OF THE NAZARENES ALLEGEDLY IN ROMANIAN TOURIST BUREAU. LUNGU SOUGHT AN "UNOFFICIAL" STREET-CORNER MEETING BETWEEN GROUP AND SAICA OF CULTS, BUT AFTER GROUP CONSIDERED EMBASSY'S CAUTIONS, MEETING NEVER CAME OFF, ACCORDING TO MUELLER.

6. GROUP LEFT BUCHAREST SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED AT LACK OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PROGRESS, BUT MORE AWARE OF LOCAL SCENE AND SEEMINGLY DETERMINED TO PRESS THEIR CASE AGAIN AT ANOTHER TIME, POSSIBLY UNDER BETTER CIRCUMSTANCES. AT ONE POINT IM CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, MUELLER REMARKED THAT GROUP HAD ONCE APPROACHED PRESIDENT NIXON PRIOR TO ONE OF HIS TRIPS TO USSR AND ASKED HIS INTERCESSION ON THEIR BEHALF IN THE SOVIET UNION; SITUATION HAD APPARENTLY IMPROVED SOMEWHAT THEREAFTER. MUELLER, WHO NOTED HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH PRESIDENT FORD, SEEM INCLINED TO

ATTEMPT THE SAME ON BEHALF OF THE ROMANIAN CHURCH.

7. FULLER ACCOUNT BY AIRGRAM.
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